

## Plan needed to get rid of deficit

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Sullivan County Commissioners continue to work on a plan to pay off a multimillion deficit from the last fiscal year before operations in the county come to a grinding halt.

**Newport** "If the audit isn't finalized, the county cannot continue to function," Sue Gottling, D-Sunapee, told the commission during its meeting Tuesday. "If it means you have to have less expenditures, then that's what needs to be done."

The county audit completed by Melanson Heath and Co. reflects a \$2.2 million deficit from fiscal 2006-2007 and the auditors require a plan to repay the money

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before the audit can be released.

"We've got to get our financial affairs in order," commissioner Ethel Jarvis said. "The most appalling thing to me was there were grant moneys in deficit."

The commission has called a special meeting at 6 p.m., Nov. 6, to make a plan to eliminate the deficit.

"Right now we don't want to get in any deeper than we are," Jarvis said.

Commissioner Ben Nelson said the commission has been working on a plan.

"I don't want it to appear as nothing is happening," Nelson said. "We've made cuts in some areas and there are more in the future."

Sullivan County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio said he has been working with the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration and Newport Financial Director Paul Brown on a scenario for a possible tax assessment to cover the deficit.

"We have to have a plan on

how we're going to handle this situation," Jarvis said.

Sunapee Selectman William Roach, who said he was attending the meeting only as a concerned citizen, blamed the county's money woes on Gil de Rubio and the commission.

"There is no question in my mind there is a fatal flaw in management," Roach said to the commission. "Do your job and make sure your county manager is doing his job."

Sullivan County Delegation Chairman Peter Franklin, D-Newport, who also attended the meeting, echoed Roach's feelings.

"It's not just finding a number of dollars that need to be raised," Franklin said. "According to the auditors, there are management problems in Sullivan County."

Franklin told the commission he would like to work together to solve the financial problems in the county.

"We hope to work together with you," Franklin said. "This

is not a battle between the commission and the delegation."

But Franklin said that in order for him to work on the problem, he will need better access to the county's financial records he claimed were denied him in the past.

"Will I get information in the future or will I need to go to court?" Franklin asked. "I've gone to court before under the Freedom of Information Act."

Jarvis pleaded with Franklin not to go to court and Gil de Rubio said Franklin will get all the information he requests.

Although the commission admits there is a problem with county finances, Nelson said he does not think it is a problem that cannot be fixed.

"We have made some cuts and the plan is under way," Nelson said. "We have a problem I don't think is insurmountable."

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